

# Tuberculosis

*Getting Healthy, Staying Healthy*



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
National Institutes of Health  
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases



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NIH Publication No. 05-5725  
May 2005  
[www.niaid.nih.gov](http://www.niaid.nih.gov)

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# What is tuberculosis?

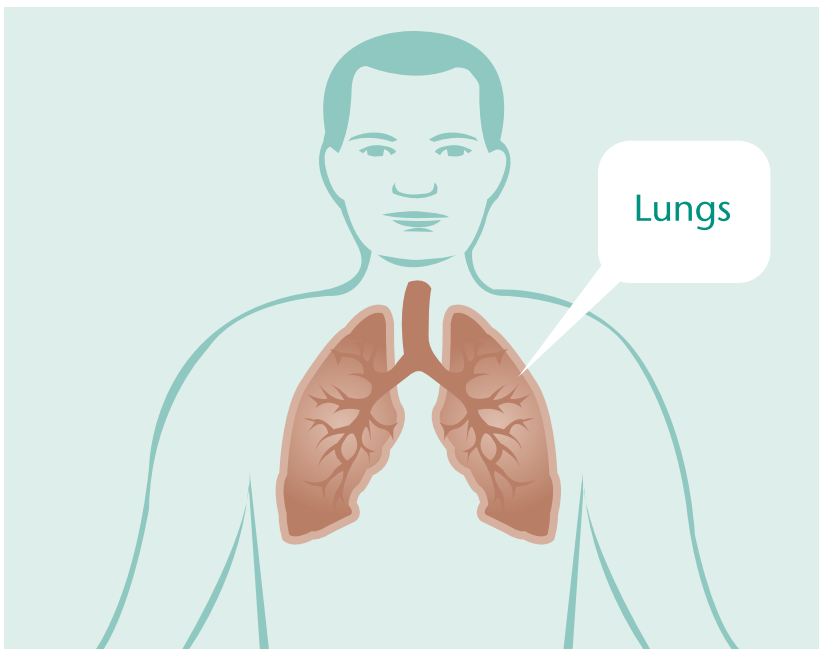
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Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by a germ. You can get this germ from another person. The TB germ can invade your lungs and make you very sick.

The germ can do two things in your body

- ◆ It can sleep quietly without you noticing it (this is called a TB infection)
- ◆ Or it can wake up and make you sick (this is called TB disease)

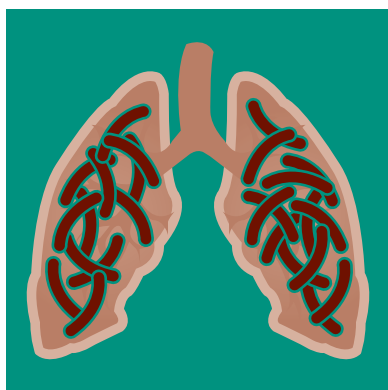
We will tell you about both in this booklet.



# What is TB infection?

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TB infection means that the TB germ is asleep in your body. You have TB infection because someone with TB disease has given the TB germ to you.



TB infection can turn into TB disease if the germ wakes up. You can stop this from happening by taking medicines to get rid of the TB germs in your body.

# Can I give TB infection to someone else?

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No. You cannot spread the germ to others when you only have a TB infection.



# How can my doctor tell if I have TB infection?

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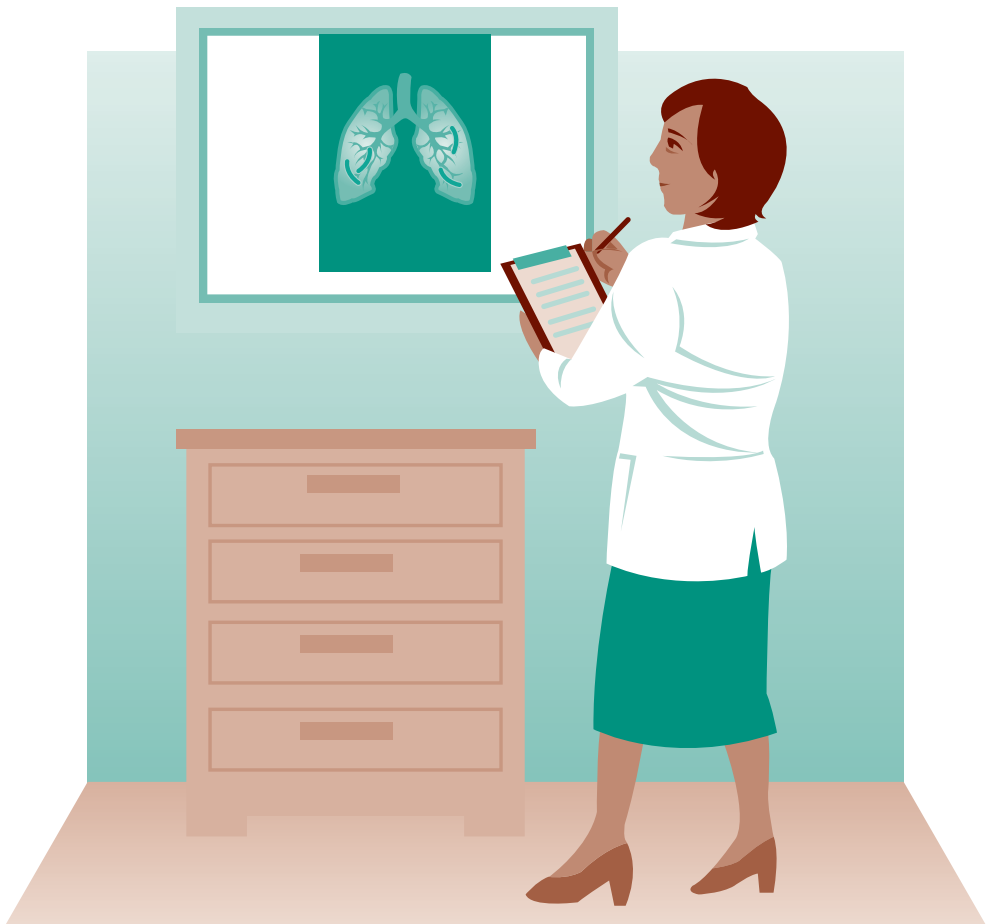
Your doctor will do different tests to see whether you have TB infection in your body.

One is called a TB skin test (or PPD test). Your doctor will inject a drop of liquid in the skin on your arm. If you have the TB germ, you will get a skin bump after a few days. This skin bump will then go away again.



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Your doctor will also take a picture of your lungs with a chest X-ray. Your doctor will know that you have a sleeping TB germ in your body if you get a skin bump after your PPD test, but there are no spots or shadows on the X-ray of your lungs.





# How does my doctor treat TB infection?

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Your doctor may give you medicines called antibiotics. You will have to take these medicines for many months to make sure all the TB germs are removed from your body.

You have to take all your medicines until your doctor tells you that you are finished, even if the medicines make you feel sick.



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You should eat well and get lots of rest while you are taking your medicines.

If you stop taking your medicines, the TB germs may stay in your body, wake up, and make you sick from TB disease.



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When you are finished taking your medicines, the TB germ should be gone from your body. A PPD test may give you a skin bump because your body remembers that you have once been infected with the TB germ.

If the medicines did not work well and not all the germs are gone from your body, you could get sick with TB disease.



# What is TB disease?

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TB can become a disease in your body and your lungs when the TB germs wake up and become active to make you sick. You may have a fever, cough, lose weight, and have night sweats.

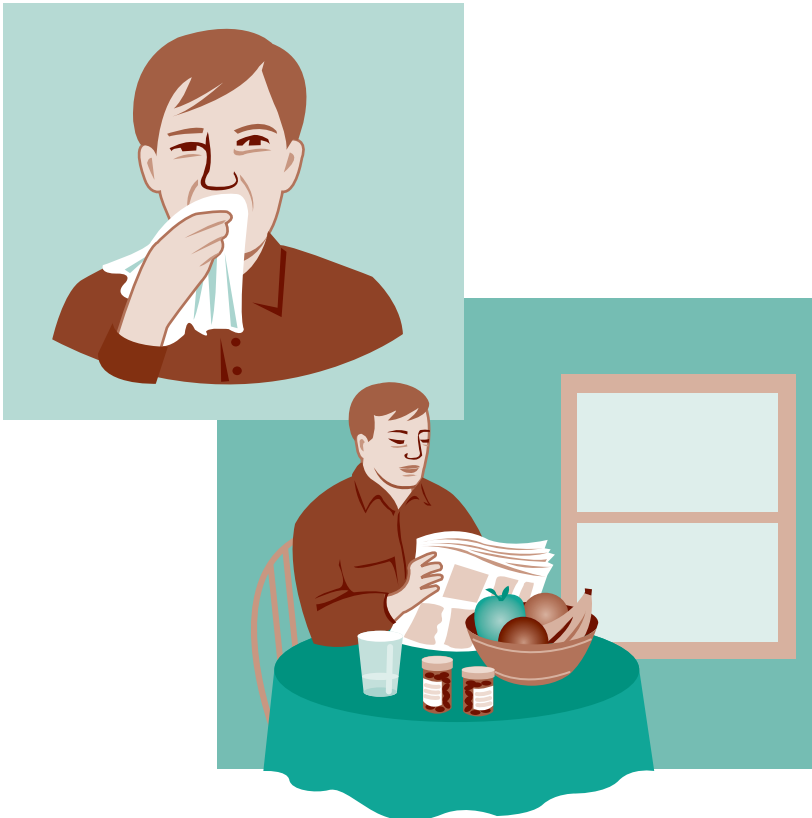


# Can I give TB disease to someone else?

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Yes. The TB germ can go through the air from your lungs to other people.

- ◆ Cover your mouth when you speak, laugh, or cough.
- ◆ Do not go to school or work until your doctor tells you that you will no longer spread the germs.



# How can my doctor tell if I have TB disease?

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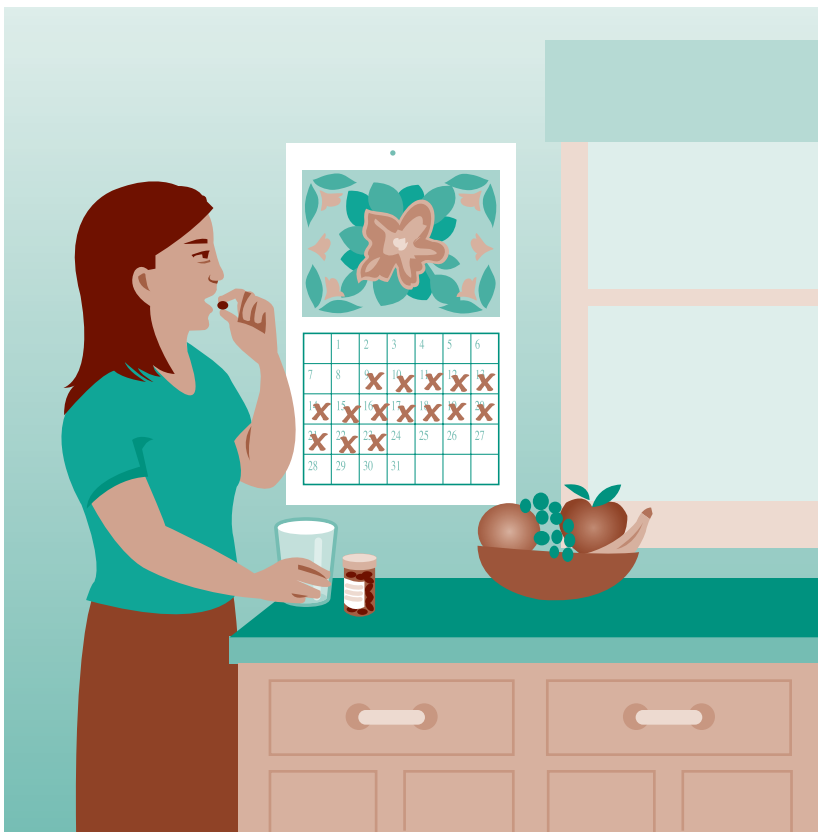
Your doctor will look at how sick you are. You will get a PPD test and an X-ray of your chest to look at your lungs.

Your doctor will know that you have TB disease if you get a skin bump after your PPD test and you have spots or shadows on the picture of your lungs.



# How does my doctor treat TB disease?

Your doctor will give you medicines, called antibiotics, that may cure your TB. You will have to take different pills for many months to make sure all the TB germs are gone from your body.



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Because it is really important that you take all your medicine, you may have to see a nurse who will give the medicine to you every day.

You have to take your medicines until your doctor tells you that you are finished, even if the medicines make you feel sick.





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You should eat well and get lots of rest while you are taking your medicines.

If you do not take your medicine every day, the TB germs may not go away and you could get very sick or die from TB.



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After you finish all your medicines, the TB germ should be gone. Because your body remembers that you have had the TB germ, a new PPD test may still give you a skin bump.

If the medicine did not kill all the TB germs, you could get TB disease again.

If you think you have TB disease again, you have to go to your doctor or clinic and say that you had TB before.



# Where can I get more information?

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## **National Library of Medicine MedlinePlus**

8600 Rockville Pike

Bethesda, MD 20894

1-888-FIND-NLM (1-888-346-3656) or 301-594-5983

<http://medlineplus.gov>

## **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

1600 Clifton Road, NE

Atlanta, GA 30333

1-800-311-3435 or 404-639-3534

<http://www.cdc.gov>

## **The American Lung Association**

61 Broadway, 6th Floor

New York, NY 10006

1-800-548-8252 or 212-315-8700

<http://www.lungusa.org>



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